

Lower Lake Roosevelt Watershed, WRIA 53

This focus sheet provides information on the availability of water for new uses in the Lower Lake Roosevelt Watershed. This information provides a starting point for potential water users in determining the best strategies for securing water for a future project or proposal in this area.

The Lower Lake Roosevelt Watershed located in eastern Washington includes that portion of Lake Roosevelt and its numerous tributary creeks and streams, lying upstream of Grand Coulee Dam to the mouth of the Spokane River. Lake Roosevelt is a reservoir on the Columbia River created by Grand Coulee Dam. The Columbia River originates in the mountains of Canada with many large tributaries from Idaho and Montana. The annual precipitation in the Lower Lake Roosevelt Watershed ranges from 11 inches per year at Grand Coulee Dam to 15 inches in the higher elevations. Only a fraction of this precipitation becomes groundwater available for human and economic uses. Most of the precipitation arrives during the winter months, when water demands are the lowest. During the summer, the snowpack is gone, there is little rain, and naturally, low stream flows are dependent on groundwater inflow. This means that groundwater and surface water are least available when water demands are the highest.

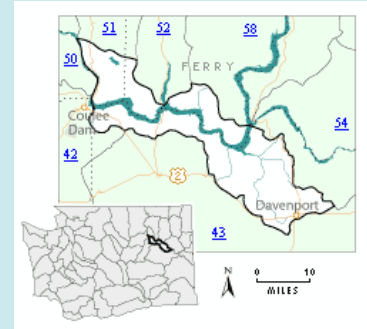
Much of the water in the Lower Lake Roosevelt Watershed has already been spoken for. Increased demands from population growth, declining groundwater levels, and impacts from climate change are adding to the challenge of finding new water supplies in WRIA 53, especially during the summer months.

The Department of Ecology has put together this document to describe factors that affect water availability in your watershed, and to tell you about some options you may have to get the water you need.

Factors affecting water availability

In 2004, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation filed notice with the Department of Ecology that the United States intends to make examinations and surveys for the utilization of the unappropriated waters of the Columbia River and its tributaries above Priest Rapids Dam, pursuant to Section 90.40.030 of the Revised Code of

MORE INFORMATION



Definitions

Mitigation plan: A scientifically-sound plan to offset the impacts of a proposed water use.

Surface water source limitations (SWSLs): A determination by State Fish and Wildlife that water is not available based on needs for fish. See RCW 77.55.050.

Washington. The withdrawal of these waters from future appropriations is currently in effect until December 23, 2014.

All new applications for surface water and groundwater connected to surface water, within WRIA 53 cannot be processed until a release from the BOR is obtained or the withdrawal has expired. The withdrawal may be extended, and Ecology expects BOR to request an extension before the withdrawal expires.

The Colville Indian Reservation lands are located within WRIA 53, lying north of the Columbia River. The Tribes are concerned about maintaining flows and fish habitat in the watershed, and water right applications and mitigation plans are routinely sent to them for their review. Federally Reserved Rights are not quantified at this time and thus the legal availability of water in these areas is undetermined.

Groundwater

In general, availability and yield of groundwater from bedrock in this WRIA is very limited by climate and geology. In addition, many areas are in decline, meaning little if any water is available for new consumptive appropriations.

Surface Water

The Lower Lake Roosevelt watershed has administrative restrictions known as Surface Water Source Limitations (SWSL), which limit most water sources in the watershed. Groundwater connected to the surface sources are also subject to SWSL restrictions. Often these restrictions require that new water uses stop during low flow periods. These restrictions indicate that most water has been appropriated within tributaries to the mainstem of the Columbia River. In addition, Hawk Creek (in which adjudication was begun but never completed) and McGinnis Lake are “closed” by SWSL, meaning the water body is closed to new uses.

Watershed Planning Progress

As lead agency, Lincoln County completed Phase 1 or organized of the Lower Lake Roosevelt Watershed Planning Unit. The planning group has received funding for their Phase 2 Level 1 assessment. The final plan is expected in late 2012.

Water supply available for new uses

The Middle Lake Roosevelt watershed is not closed to new water uses. However, the majority of water has been appropriated and new uses are subject to the above listed restrictions.

The Lake Roosevelt Incremental Storage Release is an impoundment/reservoir of the Columbia River watershed. The Office of Columbia River is currently pursuing development of water supplies on Lake Roosevelt to benefit instream and out of stream uses through storage, conservation, and regional water management agreements. Water under this project, for new appropriations, is limited to municipal and industrial supply from the Columbia River main stream.

The groundwater permit exemption allows certain users of small quantities of ground water (most commonly, single residential well owners) to construct wells and develop their water supplies without obtaining a water right permit from Ecology. For more information about the groundwater permit exemption, refer to www.ecy.wa.gov/pubs/fwr92104.pdf.

The permit exemption may not be available to prospective water users in certain areas that have been closed to further appropriation because there is limited or no water available. Check with Ecology staff at the regional office for more information.

The Office of Columbia River (OCR) is aggressively pursuing water supply development opportunities throughout the Columbia Basin. You can find additional information at the OCR Web site at: www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/cwp/crwmp.html.

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Additional options for more expedited processing of new or change applications include:

- Connecting to an established water supplier. This is the fastest and simplest option.
 - Proposing mitigation to offset the impacts to surface water and groundwater.
 - Processing your change application with the Lincoln County Water Conservancy Board.
 - Processing your application through the Cost Reimbursement Program.
- www.ecy.wa.gov/pubs/0511016.pdf.

For more information on these and other options, refer to “Alternatives for Water Right Application Processing” www.ecy.wa.gov/pubs/1111067.pdf.

Pending water right applications in this watershed

Washington water law is based on the “prior appropriation” system, often called “first in time, first in right.” Applications for water from the same source must be processed in the order they are received.

Ecology asks anyone who needs a water right (new, change, or transfer) to submit the pre-application consultation form and meet with us to review your water supply needs and project proposal.

- Apply for a New Water Right
<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/newrights.html>
- Apply to Change or Transfer a Water Right or Claim
http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/change_transfer_use.html

The map in this document shows some of the factors that will be considered when evaluating water right permit applications. Here are some information sources to assist you with your research:

- Locate and research water rights on land parcels anywhere in the state (Water Resource Explorer)
<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/info/webmap.html>
- Pending Water Right Applications by County
<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/tracking-apps.html>
- Subscribe to a water right application RSS feed for a county or WRIA
http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/wr_app_rss.html
- WRIA map showing the total number of water right claims, certificates, permits and applications
<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/Images/pdf/waterright-wria-maps.pdf>
- Search and view well reports using a variety of search tools
<https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/waterresources/map/WCLWebMap/default.aspx>

For more information

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Water Resources Program
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Spokane, WA 99205-1295
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*If you need this document in a version for the visually impaired, call the Water Resources Program at 360-407-6872.
Persons with hearing loss can call 711 for Washington Relay Service. Persons with a speech disability can call 877-833-6341*

